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ABSTRACT

In many cultures, the "troubles-talk narrative" is a speech event which builds solidarity between interlocutors through the indirect speech act of complaining and through face-saving strategies such as speaker "hedges" and listener "commiserative responses" as backchannels. The manner in which speakers perform such narratives may differ. This study examines the discourse structure of troubles-talk narrative by comparing how female speakers of English, French, and Korean indirectly complained in separate language groups in English. Participants were females ages 25 to 30 years old from a large, urban, intensive English program. Participants were placed into one of three conversation groups (native speakers of American English, native speakers of French, and native speakers of Korean), then left alone and videotaped discussing five topics. Results reveal a similar structural pattern across subject groups. The amount and proportion of hedges and indirect complaints for each group suggested group differences concerning the relationship between these two narrative elements. The differing lengths of narratives for each group suggested that the quality of troubles-talk may involve not merely the amount of complaining or hedging, but also the extent to which these elements spread across the relative length of the discourse unit. Appended are transcription conventions. (Contains 28 references.) (SM)

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"That's Too Bad": Hedges and Indirect Complaints in "Troubles-talk" Narrative

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In many cultures, the "troubles-talk narrative" is a speech event which builds solidarity between interlocutors through the indirect speech act of complaining and through face-saving strategies such as speaker "hedges" and listener "comisserative responses" as backchannels. The manner in which speakers perform such narratives, though, may differ. While an understanding of how troubles-talk is performed may help non-native learners of English avoid problems with miscommunication, limited research has investigated the discourse features necessary for them to do so. This study examines the discourse structure of troubles-talk narrative by comparing how female speakers of English, French, and Korean indirectly complain in separate language groups in English. The study reveals that while the general structure of troubles-talk is relatively similar among the three groups of speakers in terms of the Labovian elements of "narrative syntax," group differences involve the proportion of hedges to indirect complaints and the relative length of the troubles-talk narrative. The findings suggest that language teachers might instruct learners in performing troubles-talk effectively in order to provide for increased learning opportunities outside the classroom.

Oral narratives are an integral part of many cultures. They provide for, in some cases, an oral legacy in which values and beliefs are passed down from generation to generation. In other cases, they serve as theatrical entertainment, an engaging educational tool, or an informative method of reporting. For the individual, narratives even provide a life story in which the narrator may dialogically construct an identity both through the interaction with his or her audience and through the relationship with the characters or events that he or she describes. From the perspective of the researcher, the oral narrative is a unique linguistic phenomenon, as it can be analyzed in terms of its identifiable features, elements, and discourse boundaries. In addition, because of these identifiable features and elements, variation in its structure is easily controlled by the researcher when considering certain confounding social factors (Schiffrin

1981), such as race, gender, social status, and social distance. For this reason, oral narratives have been an appealing object of investigation in such fields of study as sociolinguistics, anthropology, and second language acquisition since they provide both useful ethnographic and linguistic information concerning a particular culture and its individual speakers.

In fact, over the past 30 years, there has been an increased amount of baseline research on how oral narratives are structured and performed (i.e., Bennett 1977 on verb voice; Schiffrin 1981 on tense variation; Bamberg & Marchman 1991 on binding and unfolding). Many studies have also focused on particular linguistic varieties, including both Hymes (1974) and Rickford & Rickford (1995) on Native American narratives and Labov (1972) on African-American narratives. More recently, linguistic anthropologists have examined and described the dialogic means by which individual speakers construct an identity through narratives within the structural frame that specific cultures provide (See Davies & Harré 1990; Rosenwald & Ochsberg 1992; Hermans 1996; Wortham 2000).

While this wide variety of research has revealed a distinctive structure and purpose for oral narratives within specific linguistic communities, the increasing probability of cross-cultural communication in an expanding global society necessitates further investigation into the extent to which the discourse structure of these communicative events are cross-culturally universal. Findings of such an investigation might assist learners of a second language in acquiring the linguistic, as well as sociolinguistic, competence necessary for building solidarity and providing for further interaction with native speakers outside the classroom (Wolfson 1989). At the intensive English program where this study was conducted, for example, miscommunication surrounding a particular type of narrative, what is here defined as the "troubles-talk narrative," might have been resolved by a more useful understanding of how and whether such oral narratives can cause conflicts between learners from different cultures.

Applying the findings of previous research in this area, the following study proceeds in order to examine (1) the structure of discourse produced during the "troubles-talk narrative," and (2) how this discourse structure, in a controlled context, can be compared across three different speech communities, using the investigative tool of discourse analysis. The results of this inquiry may have important implications for how ESL classes may help non-native learners of English to engage in cross-cultural interactions in which "troubles-talk" may occur.

Troubles-talk Narrative

"Troubles-talk," or "troubles-telling" as it has also been called, is an event which can involve, in part, the indirect speech act of complaining and may be considered as a specific type of oral narrative. As Boxer (1993) notes, the indirect complaint, borrowed from the work of D'Amico-Reisner

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(1985) on disapproval exchanges, can be described as a non-face-threatening speech act in which the responsible party or object of the complaint is not present during the interaction within which the speech act is performed (106). As such, the indirect complaint becomes a solidarity-building device since it freely invokes the listener to engage in a series of "comisserative responses" to demonstrate attention and concern, or to maintain intimacy and stable social relationships. According to both Tannen (1990) and Michaud & Warner (1997), such comisserative responses frequently serve as backchannels or evaluative responses in an extended structure of discourse exchanges and might include expressions like "Oh, that's horrible!, "Yeah, I know what you mean," and "That's too bad."

However, troubles-talk is more than an isolated act of indirect complaining or griping. Boxer, for example, explicitly states that indirect complaints are only "*a component* of the troubles-telling (talk) speech event" (1993:106, emphasis added), frequently serving as the initial speech act. Additionally, Bayraktaroglu (1992) in a study on Turkish comisserative responses makes this distinction between the act of complaining and the event of troubles-talk in the following manner:

> When one of the speakers informs the other speaker of the existence of a personal problem, the subsequent talk revolves around this trouble for a number of exchanges, forming a unit in the conversation where trouble is the focal point...., [involving] the speaker who initiates it by making his or her trouble public, the 'troubles-teller, and the speaker who is on the receiving end, the 'troubles-recipient.' 'Troubles-telling' is the act which initiates troubles-talk (319).

Both Tannen (1990) and Michaud & Warner (1997) use the terms "troubles-telling" and "troubles-talk" synonymously. However, Bayraktaroglu clearly suggests in the above statement that the indirect speech act of complaining, what he calls "troubles-telling," should not be confused with the larger event of troubles-talk.

Considering Bayraktaroglu's distinction, troubles-talk, as seen as a larger unit of text distinct from the speech act of complaining, might be better termed as a type of oral narrative, because a comparison of both narratives and extended units of "troubles-talk" reveals similar discourse structures. In a study of the use of conversational historical present tense in performed narratives, for instance, Wolfson (1978) explains that orally performed narratives are theatrical events in which the performer or speaker attempts to gauge the interaction with an audience in order to get across a point of view, replay the action of the narrative, and allow the listener(s) to experience vicariously the drama of the incident (217). This "gauging" is consis-

tent with Goffman (1972) which claims that "almost all acts involving others are modified" since a person, whether intentionally or unintentionally, reveals to interlocutors how he or she values him or herself, others, and the interaction which is taking place (13).

An excerpt from the data of the present study demonstrates this type of theatrical performance in extended "troubles-talk." Particularly, in response to a question concerning who was the rudest person she had ever met, one subject responds to the backchannels of her interlocutors. The subject's responses are highlighted in bold, whereas backchannels are represented by brackets.

> I . . I was with a friend of a friend over this weekend [Yeah.] .. **well, I mean** I was with my girlfriend and her good friend and they're both doctors in New York City and her friend is just so nice . she's really nice to me and she's very nice to my friend and very nice to people I guess that she assumes or she considers her social peers. [No way.] ... **But no oh God**, is she rude to just the general person. [Huh.] ... **No, if you are a waitress**, if you are a taxi cab driver, if you are a shop keeper [Yeah], she is so completely condescending [Mmm.] and rude... **Yeah. So bad** that at the end of the night at one point the cab driver was. was screaming out the door, "you're a **bitch**."

This troubles-talk narrative is interesting for several reasons. First, it is consistent in its elaboration, as when the speaker states that her friends were doctors from New York City, a detail which contributes to the purpose of the story. Second, it is clear that the speaker is performing before an audience and attempting to convey the main point, since she is responding directly to verbal and, perhaps, nonverbal cues during interaction. For example, she uses expressions like "But oh God" and "bitch," adding an engaging emotionality to the account. In addition, she responds directly to audience backchannels in expressions like "well I mean" and "No, if you're a waitress" which occur in the transcript just after short pauses that are filled by backchannels from the other two interlocutors. However, these backchannels do not interrupt the speaker during her narrative, since the primary speaker remains in control of the interaction. Edelsky (1981) terms this control of a verbal interaction as "the floor," and states that while bids for control of the floor may be put forth by interlocutors, back channels do not serve this function (398). Edelsky further describes two different types of floor: a floor in which one primary interlocutor is the "floor-holder" and one in which floor involves a collaborative effort in which interlocutors share the floor in a "free-for-all" (383). These several interactional and

performative features concerning audience (e.g., "gauging," "backchannels," and "floor-holding") reveal that troubles-talk can assume narrative-like features.

Troubles-talk and Narrative Discourse

Labov (1972) suggests another pattern that is similar to troubles-talk. Labov states that the narrative is characterized by a recapitulation of past experiences in which a sequence of clauses match a sequence of actual events (359-60). In addition, the more fully developed narrative consists of a series of six definable elements, including the abstract or title (in which the narrator sets up the point of the story with something like "Have you heard the one about"), the orientation (in which the narrator provides the time, place, persons, and situation), the complicating action (in which the narrator recounts a series of events), the evaluation (in which the narrator indicates why the story is told through a series of "free clauses"), the result or resolution (in which the complicating action is resolved), and the coda (in which the narrator signals that the story has finished) (363). Similar to Labov's narrative, the more fully developed troubles-talk reveals these characteristics, especially if hedges are considered as evaluative narrative elements, and indirect complaints as a form of complicating action.

Hedges and Indirect Complaints

An additional element to the troubles-talk narrative, which is not included within Labov's framework, can be identified. This element has been termed here as a "hedge" (Brown & Levison 1978). A hedge in a troubles-talk narrative is an attempt on the part of the narrator to maintain his or her face while complaining so as not to seem too mean or critical in the eyes of audience members. As Brown & Levinson (1978) point out, face is the "consistent self-image or 'personality' by interlocutors," the image which they desire to maintain (61). It is because of the desire to maintain face that speakers engage in "positive politeness strategies," demonstrating closeness, intimacy and rapport between speaker and listener, and "negative politeness strategies," indicating social distance between interlocutors (2). If applied to the Labovian structure for narratives, devices such as a hedge (HG) might be understood as a specific type of evaluation of face in the narrative, and an indirect complaint (IC) as a specific type of complicating action.

But the question still remains as to how this troubles-talk narrative may differ cross-culturally. While a wide variety of research has focused on cross-cultural comparisons of individual speech acts (e.g., Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1989, on requests and apologies; Trosborg, 1987, on apologies; Billmyer, 1990, on compliments; Einstein & Bodman, 1986, on expressions of gratitude; both Tokano (1997) and Olshtain & Weinbach, 1993, on direct complaints; Wolfson, 1981 on invitations and compliments), few studies have

compared the discourse structure of the troubles-talk speech event. Bayraktaroglu (1992) is one exception. However, while this study reveals the distinctive features of Turkish comisserative responses that can be compared to native-speaker baseline data, it does not address how troubles-talk is structured as a unit of narrative discourse during interaction.

The Study

This research study examines the discourse structure of such longer stretches of the troubles-talk narrative during the conversations of 3 groups of female subjects at a large urban intensive English program: native English-speaking American-born subjects, non-native English-speaking French subjects, and non-native English-speaking Korean subjects. The principal research questions for this inquiry are the following:

(1) How can the discourse structure of the "troubles-talk narrative" be described?

(2) How is the discourse structured similarly or differently between native English-speakers, Korean non-native English speakers, and French non-native English speakers?

Subjects

Nine subjects between the ages of 25 –30 volunteered to participate in this study and were placed into one of three conversation groups consisting of 3 subjects each: 3 native speakers of American English (Group A), 3 native speakers of French (Group F), and 3 native speakers of Korean (Group K). Only female subjects were selected so as to control for linguistic differences that may be attributed to gender. The subjects filled out information cards to determine age range, general language proficiency in English, social status, and social distance in order to control for each of these variables and to ensure that each group of subjects would be conversing under the same conditions, excluding the independent variable of native language background. Social distance, in particular, was determined by asking each subject to rate the other two members of her group on a scale of 0 to 6 (e.g., 0 for complete strangers; 3 for casual acquaintances; 6 for intimate friends). The following table represents the background information for each of the subjects in their respective groups. Subjects were assigned pseudonyms (e.g., A1, F1, K1) in order to identify their native language and to protect the privacy of each individual.

As Table 1 shows, the 3 groups of subjects maintain fairly stable and similar relationships with each other. The subjects are also approximately within the same age range (between 25-30) and are of approximately the same social status and distance. That is, each of the subjects rated her relationship with other members of her group between 3 and 4 in social distance, classifying group relationships as "casual acquaintances."

Table 1. Background Information

	N	Job	Marital Status	English Proficiency	Social Distance 1	2	3
K	K1	manager	married	advanced	-	3	3
	K2	teacher	single	advanced	3	-	3
	K3	student	single	high-intermediate	3	4	-
F	F1	teacher	single	advanced	-	3	3
	F2	teacher	married	advanced	3	-	3
	F3	teacher	single	advanced	3	3	-
A	A1	teacher	married	native	-	4	4
	A2	administrator	single	native	4	-	4
	A3	teacher	married	native	3	3	-

Data Collection

In the same small comfortable room, each of the three conversation groups were left alone and were videotaped discussing for 30 minutes five topics written on index cards which were designed to elicit informal troubles-talk narratives. Two topics (*) served as distracters for control of bias. These topics included the following in order:

(1) Countries You Have Visited*

(2) Favorite Actors and Actresses*

(3) The Worst Student in Your Class (do not mention his/her name)

(4) A Rude Person You Have Met (do not mention his/her name)

(5) The Recent Cold Weather

The first two topics were discarded as distracters, and the conversation about the latter three topics were transcribed, comprising a total of approximately 60 minutes of videotaped data.

Method of Data Analysis

In this study, troubles-talk narratives are analyzed in terms of their discourse structure in order to see what patterns emerge from the three groups of subjects. Two features are evident for all the subjects: ICs and HGs. Each IC, though often embedded within a specific complicating action, is treated as an individual instance or move that expresses a negative comment of the physical behavior, verbal behavior, or personality or characteristic of the object of the IC, contributing to the main point of the narrative (e.g.,

"rude," "is always swearing," or "totally self-absorbed," respectively). If the same IC is repeated later in the narrative, whether by repeating the same word or by merely repeating the same offending behavior or characteristic, it is counted as an additional feature in the narrative. The following excerpted sample demonstrates this method of identification for one unit of discourse (See Appendix for transcription conventions).

Table 2. Sample Indirect Complaints (IC) in Troubles-talk Narratives

	A1	A2	A3
1		I have one student who .. he. It's not	
2		that he's horrible, he just [ ] ..**he**	
3		**doesn't want to be here** and it's very	
4		apparent. He's trying..**he's having**	
5		**a difficult time** distinguishing	
6		between personal and academic	
7		relationships and **he wants to charm**	
8		his way into the class instead of doing	
9	[Right.] $_1$	the work	[Oh.] $_2$
10		[ ] $_1$ **cause he's** [ ] $_2$ **really not**	
11		**interested. He just wants to be**	
12		**somewhere else**..	
13		and **he's quite verbal about that and**	
14	[That's hard.	because of [**that he's just not**	
15	because it affects the	**interested in being here so he's**	
16	other] students	**having a difficult time** so he **sits**	
17	too.=	**there]**	
18			=Yeah....XXX
19			(laugh)
20		Yeah. What about you? (looks to A3)	

In the narrative in Table 2, nine ICs (highlighted in bold) can be counted. It should also be noted, here, that one unit of discourse (i.e., one troubles-talk turn) is defined by its boundaries in Labovian terms. A troubles-talk narrative is initiated when the speaker presents an orientation to the story (i.e., she identifies the setting, person, etc.). The turn is terminated when either the speaker/narrator accomplishes the coda or when another speaker/narrator initiates a newly introduced abstract via self-selection or nomination by another speaker. Similar to Schiffrin's (1981) study of narratives, this troubles-talk narrative structure can be understood as a "bound unit of discourse" (45). And in this way, a narrative turn is not terminated when another speaker provides backchannels or comisserative responses to the narrative discourse, as Edelsky's (1981) discussion of backchannels and floor proposes. Based on the previous studies conducted by Labov, Schriffrin, and Edelsky, therefore, nine narrative discourse units are identified, one for each subject.

The HGs in this study are identified as moves grammatically external to the clause in which the IC occurs when the narrator either (1) qualifies negative ICs with a positive comment or disclaimer, (2) initially defers from performing a complaint but continues with the narrative regardless, or (3) provides an excuse to justify the behavior or characteristic of the object of the complaint. An example of an HG is the qualifying statement, "he's just not interested in being here" from Table 2 (lines 13-14). This HG is external to the IC clause since it is, in Labovian terms, a "free clause" of evaluation which suspends the complicating action of the narrative (361). In this troubles-talk narrative, the HG further qualifies the preceding critical statement that the narrator expresses and does not continue the sequence of actions to serve the purpose of the narrative. For the purposes of this study, internal HGs, such as "just" in the statement above, occur within the grammatical structure of the IC clause and are not counted in the analysis. Since both ICs and HGs are the most frequently used and most salient feature of troubles-talk narratives, instances of both features are counted for each subject's narratives and group means are calculated. The proportion of mean HGs to mean ICs is also calculated and compared across the groups. Finally, since there are large differences in the length of narratives, the mean number of lines of transcript for the narratives of each group is also calculated. The calculation of the length of narratives in this way allows for a more accurate analysis of troubles-talk for the three groups. And since standard transcription conventions are employed, the number of lines for the narratives serve as an appropriate and manageable calculation of length.

Results

The data in this study suggest three sets of findings regarding the troubles-talk narrative performed by the three subject groups. First, the findings reveal a similar structural pattern across subject groups, and this pattern broadly matches the structure outlined in Labov (1972). Second, the amount and proportion of hedges and indirect complaints for each group suggests group differences concerning the relationship between these two narrative elements. Third, the differing lengths of narratives for each group suggest that the quality of troubles-talk may involve not merely the amount of complaining or hedging, but also the extent to which these elements spread across the relative length of the discourse unit.

Structure of Troubles-talk Narrative

As a discourse unit with definable boundaries, the troubles-talk narratives for each of the three groups of subjects reveal a similar pattern. All three groups use Labov's categories to recount their narratives, initiating troubles-talk with an orientation and concluding with the coda. This pattern seems to frame the troubles-talk narrative so well that by the coda of most narratives of one speaker, the other interlocutors, at times, self-nomi-

nate (in 7 out of the 9 discourse units) and introduce their own narratives after this sequence. Two of the floor-holding narrators substitute the coda with a nominating move, such as "What about you?" Often the coda is initiated by a drawn out expression like "So:: . . ." and a pause, indicating to interlocutors that the floor is now open. It is these two characteristics (that is, orientation and coda) which may more clearly define the "troubles-talk narrative." The resolution and evaluation, although present in some narratives, is less frequent.

Further, the more fully-developed troubles-talk narrative reveals the extended sequencing of complicating actions as a series of independent clauses. In the one narrative about a woman in New York City described above, the orientation "I . . I was with a friend of a friend over this weekend" is clear. But, a continuation of the narrative demonstrates this sequencing of complicating action (highlighted below in bold). The subject (A1) narrates:

> So bad that at the end of the night at one point **the cab driver was . was screaming** out the door, you're a bitch. And I think **she has a problem** with that [ ] because **she was just like yeah whatever. Said something** else to him and just kinda, you know . . **she laughed** and **my friend laughed and he just kinda was trying to deal with driving** and then when **we got out, he basically started screaming** out the window, you're a bitch. Once we got totally out of the cab, **she got really mad and turned around** and like. . . And **I was just standing there** thinking. So. I'm so happy someone . . [ ] else agrees with me.

The subject here uses evaluative responses like "I think she has a problem with that" with "I think" serving as external HGs. Also, she narrates a series of complicating events which are matched with a sequence of clauses. Finally, the end of this excerpt demonstrates a coda punctuated by the expression "So" ("So. I'm so happy someone else agrees with me"). No abstract or resolution is evident in this narrative, but as will be discussed below, this fact does not undermine the claim here that troubles-talk can be termed as a narrative.

For both Korean and French subjects, the narratives assume structures similar to their American counterparts. In response to the same question about a rude person, both groups narrate their experiences. In Tables 4 and 5 below, the narratives are analyzed in terms of their structural elements. Complicating actions are highlighted in bold.

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Table 4. The Narrative of a Korean Speaker of English

Abstract	NONE
Orientation	There are a lot of afrenche **they speak frenche** a lot **I don't understand**..
Orientation	Teacher divide five or four groups to discussion about something. The time just me and then two of three safrenche.
Complications	**They speak french I don't understand.** What's this? I don't understand.
Orientation	So when I together with Korean and one Japan or other country, **I try to speak** Korean. Ah, **English** .. because one person don't understand Korean
Evaluation	so I feel sorry
Complications	so I try to speak English. **Teacher didn't ask that** .. She don't .. **they don't mind that** so .. rude .. very rude .. Teacher don't ask about that so it's ok ...
Evaluation	Some times I get angry.
Coda	It's ok. So::

Table 5. The Narrative of a French Speaker of English

Abstract	Ah yes,
Orientation	we go to McDonald's .. ah .. ah ..
Evaluation	and it was ..terrible .. terrible,
Orientation	My sister came in October and I'm .. she's never been in England She's never been in the US. She's never been in an English-speaking country
Evaluation	so her English is kind of .. I don't know .. basic.
Orientation	And ah .. we went to order something where..
Complications	**the woman gave her such a hard time. She was said like .** What? don't understand. Eh: eh: eh: Can you .. ah .. can take care of her? **I didn't underst** .. and my sister ..
Evaluation	I felt so bad for her cause she came back .. she was .. like .. you know, I don't know, I don't know.

Complications	**She saying my English was so bad and I thought people don't pay attention** to me. They are so .. so rude. **They don't look at you** when you order. **Say like what do you want?** (rolls eyes) **do like this.** Or **say what do you want?** (looks down) like this. **They don't care** about you. **They don't respond**. [] or **they don't say, Hello.**
Resolution	No. No. This.. Never I will g..go there again.
Coda	So..How about you? (look to F2) Y..you..you..the rudest person you know.

In a broad sense, Tables 4 and 5 map out the narratives for each group onto the structural pattern of Labov's narrative elements in a manner similar to that of native English speaker narratives. However, as the tables above demonstrate, the data does not fit neatly into Labov's framework, as it is not always clear which parts of the stories fit into which categories. For example, the fact that, in the Korean narrative, the orientation seems to comprise a set of three distinct threads which collectively construct the setting (e.g., "they speak frenche," "teacher divide [the class]," and "I try to speak ... English") and the fact that embedded within these threads are possible complicating actions such as "I don't understand" makes the task of clearly mapping out the narrative difficult. The French narrative proves just as perplexing. Still, Labov's categories are useful if only to lay out a general structure for the troubles-talk narrative.

Another difficulty with the data is that the character or quality of group interaction between the three groups differs. For instance, the Korean and American subjects in this study perform narratives in distinct discourse units, framed not only by orientation and coda but also by a clear holding of the floor on the part of an individual narrator. That is, during the performance of a particular narrative in these two groups, the remaining interlocutors tend to respond using backchannels or comisserative responses. Even though French subjects frame narratives in the same way, the character of their interaction is somewhat different. Frequently, these individual subjects overlap narratives as Table 6 suggests.

Table 6. Sample Interaction of French Subjects' Troubles-talk

	F1	F2	F3
1	Yeah I know. I like when		
2	Americans speak French. I		
3	like that [ ] accent.	[Of course.]	[Oh yeah.]
4		Because maybe [ ] they are	[Hah.] (rolls eyes)
5		(inaudible).	
6			Oh, yes. This person say
7			to my sister. Or they say ..
8			they say .. like this
9			<<voulez vous couche
10			avec mo ..>> (with a slow
11			exaggerated speech) Like
12			they .. they know only this
13			sentence .. ah you know
14			this song .. the song that
15	[No. No. I don't know	[<<voulez vous couche	go, [<<voulez vous couche
16	this.]	avec moi, si soir>>]	avec moi, si soir>>]
17	(laugh)	(singing)	(singing)
18	Or, one guy said to me like		
19	.. in the store .. like		
20	<<merci bucoop, merci		
21	bucoop>> (Emphasizing		(laugh)
22	American r and p)	(laugh)	
23	(laugh)		
24		Or <<ce'st chovette le	
25		guignol>>.	
26	Yeah. Yeah. Like that guy		
27	.. in the store. He love the		[Yeah.]
28	French accent. [ ] That's		
29	so pretty (high pitch) [ ] So		
30	pretty. So cute. They have	[So pretty.]	
31	this thing about the French		
32	accent. I don't know. I		
33	don't know. They love ..		
34	the guys they love the		
35	French accent.		

This overlapping of narratives during the interaction between the French subjects is not evident during the interactions among the members of the other two groups (e.g., American and Korean). What is interesting in Table 6, though, is that while particular events and situations are narrated, including such characters as "sister" and "one guy," the interaction might be more broadly seen as a general discussion of stereotypes concerning the "Americans" and the "French" (see lines 1-2) (A. Reyes, personal communication, March 22, 2001). This observation is further supported by the pronominal shifts from 3rd person singular to 3rd person plural by both F3 and F1 (lines 6-7, 27-30), indicating that the narrative concerning the sister's experience is momentarily suspended in order to allow for a general reflection on American behavior. Additionally, this general discussion reveals

an extended sharing of the floor during which interlocutors, particularly F1 and F3, bid for the floor by introducing their narratives with orientations. F1 begins with "I like when Americans speak French" (line 1), interrupting F3's narrative about her sister's experience with a native speaker of English. F3 continues her narrative in line 6 until F1 interrupts again in line 18 with "Like that guy in the store." F2 makes no bid for the floor, providing only backchannels to the other two narratives. Such cases of overlap indicate that, during interaction, the troubles-talk narratives among the French subjects have a much looser, perhaps more general, structure in comparison to the narratives of either the American or the Korean groups. That is, the structure allows for successful bids for the floor. In this sense, interaction between French subjects during troubles-talk is characterized by what Edelsky (1981) describes as a collaborative "free for all" in floor-holding among interlocutors (383).

Relationships between Hedges and Indirect Complaints

Concerning ICs and HGs, the data yield another revealing finding. Once the total number of each subject's ICs and HGs are counted, and the mean number of the categories for each group are calculated, the resulting figures show that, in the case of these subjects, the Americans and the French use approximately the same amount of ICs (means 17.00 and 19.67, respectively). In addition, the two groups use approximately the same amount of HGs (mean 9.67 and 6.67, respectively). The Korean subjects, on the other hand, use fewer ICs (mean 10.33), yet their use of HGs (mean 5.67) is much

Table 7. Means and Proportions of Hedges, Indirect Complaints, and Narrative Length

	N	Total IC	Mean IC	Mean Length (lines)	Total HG	Mean HG	Ratio of Mean HG to Mean IC
	A1	18			8		
A	A2	14	17.00	42.34	9	9.67	.57
	A3	19			12		
	F1	23			9		
F	F2	19	19.67	18.67	5	6.67	.34
	F3	17			6		
	K1	9			6		
K	K2	7	10.33	25.34	4	5.67	.55
	K3	15			7		

closer to the use of HGs among American subjects. Table 7 reveals this comparison more clearly.

The discrepancy between the groups might seem to indicate that the Americans and the French are frequent "complainers" and that the Koreans are less so, since there is a mean difference in ICs between the American group and Korean group of 6.67, and between the French group and the Korean group of 9.34. However, once the proportions of mean HGs to mean ICs for each group are calculated, a very different picture is painted.

According to Table 6, American subjects, for example, tend to complain a little less than twice as much as they hedge. A close look at the transcript reveals that, roughly, for every two ICs, Americans generally perform one HG. Korean narratives demonstrate a similar pattern, although the subjects complain far less. Thus, despite the fact that Korean subjects use less ICs compared to the Americans, the proportions of their HGs to their ICs are fairly equal (that is, Americans with a mean proportion of .57 and Koreans with a mean proportion of .55). The French subjects, however, complain approximately the same amount as Americans with a minimal mean difference (2.67), but perform HGs only a third of the time (mean .34). A look at the French transcript reveals that, overall, for every three ICs, these subjects tend to perform one HG. It is not that the French subjects in this case complain so much but that they do not counter their complaints with hedges as often as the other two groups. Similarly, it is not that the Korean subjects refrain from complaining but that they tend to counter their indirect complaints with more frequent hedges. American subjects tend to lie somewhere in the middle.

Relative Length of Troubles-talk Narrative

The mean length of troubles-talk narratives for each group of subjects is a salient factor in analyzing the data as well. Because there are distinct differences in narrative length, an individual subject who complains and hedges the same amount as another subject but who performs a shorter narrative might, at first, seem as employing these narrative features in the same manner. However, another look at the data proves otherwise.

Table 7 shows that the mean length of narratives for American subjects is 42.34 lines in the transcript, followed by Korean subjects with a mean length of 25.34 lines, and French subjects with 18.67. If the mean lengths for each group are then compared to the mean ICs and mean HGs, a clearer understanding of troubles-talk for the groups can be achieved. For example, in the case of American subjects, the amount of ICs and HGs is minimal in relation to narrative length (17.00 and 9.67, respectively). That is, ICs account for a little less than one-fourth, and HGs a little less than one-tenth, of the mean narrative length. For Korean subjects, the amount of ICs and HGs are also minimal in relation to the mean length of narratives. In these cases, ICs account for approximately one-half, and HGs one-fifth, of mean

narrative length (10.33 and 5.67, respectively). ICs for French subjects, however, constitute the bulk of narrative length (19.67), but HGs account for approximately one-third (6.67). These findings indicate that the relationship between ICs and HGs, on the one hand, and the length of troubles-talk narrative, on the other, provide a more accurate description of how these subject groups utilize these features during interaction.

Discussion

The results of this study suggest that troubles-talk narratives are complex events bounded by identifiable features similar to those described in Labov (1972). Further, this type of narrative can not only be considered as a discourse unit for the purposes of discourse analysis, but it can also be seen as "performed," in the Wolfsonian sense that they involve a narrator playing out a scene in front of a captive audience which provides comisserative responses. Therefore, with regard to the first research question of this study, (1) How can the discourse structure of the "troubles-talk narrative" be described?, the discourse of the troubles-talk narrative is identifiable and patterns out in a similar manner to the performed narratives in Wolfson (1978) and Labov (1972). However, the manner in which narratives are spread throughout interaction between interlocutors varies in terms of floor-holding, bids for the floor, and relative length of troubles-talk. In the case of the French subjects, a looser, more general quality is evident in troubles-talk during which interlocutors are able to maintain a "free-for-all" in floor-holding, while American and Korean subjects are not. Further, for the Americans and the Koreans in this study, the effect of face plays an important role in the structure of the troubles-talk narrative. In the data of this study, positive politeness strategies take the form of hedges. For the French subjects, positive face plays less of a role, since they use less hedging strategies in proportion to indirect complaints over the spread of the narratives. Regardless of this difference, however, the data suggest the following pattern of moves for troubles-talk narratives for all subjects:

(a) Orientation (required)

(b) Complicating Action (required, amount is optional)

- Indirect Complaint (required)
- Hedge (required, amount depending on the interlocutor's concern for face)

(c) Evaluation (amount is optional)

(d) Resolution (optional)

(e) Coda (required)

Because the troubles-talk narrative assumes the above general structure for sequenced elements in this type of narrative and allows for variation between subjects in their use of optional evaluation and resolution, distinct discourse units can be identified. In addition, because subject narratives allow for the effect of face through hedges, Boxer's (1993) statement that indirect complaints are non-face threatening may not apply to the subjects' speech in these narrative events. In this sense, subjects may be using hedges to save either their own face or the face of others because too much complaining may be viewed as an undesirable quality.

The second research question of this study addresses the similarities and differences between subject groups:

> (2) How is the discourse structured similarly or differently between native English-speakers, Korean non-native English speakers, and French non-native English speakers?

While some differences in the amount of indirect complaints are evident between both the American subjects and Korean subjects, the data shows that the two groups are similar in the proportion of hedges to indirect complaints. Also, these groups are different from the French subjects who complain just as much but use fewer hedges, especially in relation to their mean narrative length. The difference in the amount of indirect complaints and the length of narratives may be due to language proficiency. Since the Korean subjects are intermediate to advanced learners of English, and since the French and American subjects are proficient or native speakers, the discrepancy may be due to the Koreans' more limited repertoire of complaining strategies. However, this aspect of the present study does not undermine the results since the comparison of calculated proportions for the groups counter-balance the limiting factor of language proficiency by setting subjects on an even-keel in terms of how proficiency might affect the performance of troubles-talk narrative. That is, the study does not focus on the increased amount of complaining or hedging, which may be influenced by the variable of language proficiency. Rather, the study focuses on the relative character of such narrative features in relationship to each other.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of the study involves the method of data collection and internal validity. Because the troubles-talk narratives were elicited through the use of topic index cards, the extent to which such a discourse unit reflects natural speech is questionable. For example, as stated above, abstracts in most of the subjects' narratives are not evident. As Wolfson (1989) indicates in regard to narratives elicited during interviews to collect samples of "natural speech," a researcher eliciting this type of data assumes that the narratives told are "not part of the question/answer pattern of the inter-

view" (69). In part, this is a valid criticism of such methods of data collection. However, for the purposes of this study, a possible baseline of data is, here, set up, despite its elicited nature.

Additionally, the sample size in this study limits external validity. Because only 9 subjects, 3 from each native language group, were selected on a volunteer basis and because random sampling was not possible, the assumption that these subjects represent their native culture's population confines the potential for generalizability. Furthermore, the length of stay in the U.S. is a factor which could have influenced pragmatic and sociolinguistic transfer on the part of the non-native speaking subjects. In this study, this factor is not taken into consideration. It is feasible, therefore, that non-native subjects may have performed narratives in an "American manner" for the purposes of the researcher. For these reasons, some caution should be taken in making any assumptions that the findings of this study suggest that native and non-native speakers of English generally structure the discourse of troubles-talk differently. Rather, this study should be seen as a pilot study which suggests a pattern or trend to be further investigated.

Future Research

Further research not only on troubles-talk but on complaining strategies, in general, is needed, and this study provides some implications for doing so. First, a more controlled study with a larger sample of the language groups is required, a study which further employs inferential statistics to ensure that the differences in the structure of troubles-talk are not due to random error. Second, subjects from different language groups might be studied to gain a better perspective on the range of structures employed in different cultures. And third, two or three methods for data collection should be used as tools for gathering a wide range of data to triangulate and come to a better understanding of the factors at work in the performance of this type of discourse structure.

As soon as such a body of research is conducted and the data analyzed and compared, the benefits to non-native learners of any language will be attainable. Learners who acquire competence in performing troubles-talk narrative, its characteristic indirect complaining and required hedging strategies in U.S. culture, may be able to break through the pragmatic and sociolinguistic boundaries of communication between themselves and native speakers. The ESL classroom can be instrumental in this regard. ESL instructors might provide direct instruction, as well as opportunities to practice such features, and might emphasize the role of this type of narrative in increasing opportunities for interaction and learning outside the classroom.

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Appendix

Transcription Conventions

[ ]	simultaneous speech
[ ]1 [ ]2	multiple cases of simultaneous speech in one line of dialog
Wonderful.	utterances that are stressed
XX XXX XXXX	inaudiable due to simultaneous speech
(inaudible)	inaudible due to softly spoken speeech
( )	non-linguistic or paralinguistic behavior
<< >>	utterances in a foreign language
.. ..	short pauses
=	interrupted speech
Eh: eh: eh:	short staccato speech
So::	elongated speech
"you're a bitch"	quoted speech

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